

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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INDEX

Prices of Consumer Goods in 1952.....1
Prices of Goods Sold in State Stores in 1952.....1-2
Prices of Goods Sold in Free Market.....2
Changes in Standard of Living Since 1946.....2-3
Soviet Attitudes Toward Standard of Living.....3

PRICES OF CONSUMER GOODS IN 1952

1. The prices indicated below are those which were charged for consumer goods sold in state stores on Gorodomlya Island and in state stores and open markets in Ostashkov.

Prices of Goods Sold in State Stores in 1952

I.	Item	Price in Rubles
	1 kilo of sugar	13.50
	1 kilo of butter	40.00
	1 kilo of margarine	25.00
	1 kilo of suet	25.00
	10 eggs	9.00

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(Note: Washington Distribution Indicated By "X"; Field Distribution By "#".)

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SECRET

-2-

Prices of Goods Sold in State Stores in 1952

<u>Item</u>	<u>Price in Rubles</u>
1 liter milk	3.50
1 kilo salt	2.00
1 kilo noodles	13.00
1 kilo peas	24.00
1 kilo beans	28.00
1 kilo apples	10.00
1 kilo groats	10.00
1 kilo potatoes	.80
1 kilo black bread	2.00
1 kilo white bread	8.00
1 roll	.75
10 "Duket" cigarettes	.80
20 "Belomore" cigarettes	2.45
20 "Drug" cigarettes	7.00
20 "Troika" cigarettes	15.00
1 box matches	.20
1 bottle champagne	34.00
1 bottle vodka	25.00
1 bottle wine	30.00
1 bottle wine (from fruit)	15.00
1 pair woman's "Bata" shoes	375.00
1 pair man's "Bata" shoes	450.00
1 pair poor quality fabric shoes (from)	50.00
1 pair felt boots	150.00
1 overcoat, poor material	700.00
1 Persian lamb fur coat	15,000- 20,000.00
1 rabbit fur coat	2,000- 3,000.00
1 medium quality fur coat	3,000.00
1 meter good quality wool for man's suit	400- 560.00
1 meter good quality wool for woman's wear	250.00
1 meter silk material	200.00
1 meter linen material	20.00
1 pair woman's stockings (generally of German manufacture)	40.00
1 pair man's socks (generally of German manufacture)	15.00

Prices of Goods Sold in Free Market

<u>II.</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Price in Rubles</u>
	1 kilo butter (increased to 60 rubles in March 1952)	45.00
	10 eggs (prices varied according to season)	12- 28.00
	1 kilo flour	20.00
	1 liter milk	5.00
	1 kilo potatoes (in season)	2.00
	1 kilo potatoes (in winter) (up to)	8.00
	1 kilo apples	15.00
	1 kilo cabbage	3.00
	1 kilo tomatoes (prices varied according to season)	5- 15.00

CHANGES IN STANDARD OF LIVING SINCE 1946

2. [] considerable improvement in living conditions- particularly during the period following the 1947 currency reform. This improvement was reflected in more food and better clothing at cheaper prices.

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

-3-

25X1

3. The best years in terms of prices and availability of food products were 1948 to 1950. Conditions declined somewhat in 1951 and 1952, in that some food items which previously had been available in state stores were seldom obtainable. Articles in short supply in 1952 included butter, sugar, margarine, oil and canned goods. Furthermore, flour was sold only three times a year in the state stores (Christmas, May Day, and October Revolution anniversary).
4. There was a seasonal shortage of bread during the entire period of my stay in the Soviet Union. It was rarely available each year for five or six weeks during the months of May and June, shortly before the local grain harvest. This shortage resulted from poor planning. There was simply no flour available at the end of a harvest year.
5. In recent years state authorities have continued to carry out price reductions of consumer goods ranging from 10 to 50 per cent. However, these reductions represented no great improvement in later years as they primarily affected articles used in small quantities (salt, for example) or articles which were unavailable in state stores (such as butter). In addition, there was a noticeable deterioration of quality of goods singled out for price reductions.
6. There was an enormous improvement in respect to clothing articles after the currency reform. There has been no marked change in this situation in recent years, although it was noticeable that fewer items of clothing were available in the years 1951-52.
7. Apparently few items of clothing of foreign manufacture were sold in state stores

25X1

SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD STANDARD OF LIVING

8. The Soviet population reacted very favorably to the periodic reduction of consumer goods' prices. All were happy to hear of these price cuts, although workers often complained bitterly that the price of vodka had not been reduced enough. The price cuts carried out in 1952 were relatively small. The Soviet population noted this fact but they blamed it on the Korean war and on the need to rearm.
9. All in all, the people seemed satisfied with the price reductions, even in 1951 and 1952. The Soviets were convinced that living conditions had constantly improved since the end of World War II and would continue to improve. Soviets remarked that defense requirements retarded progress in improving the standard of living but that such needs would not exist forever. They looked forward to a period of real prosperity when the time came to reduce armament expenditures. The hope was often expressed that the Soviet economy would reach the stage of Communism. It was believed that then a sufficient quantity of consumer goods would be available to meet the needs of all without reliance upon a monetary system of exchange.

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-4-

25X1

Persons who had served with the Soviet Army in Germany clearly recognized that standards of living were higher in the West than in the Soviet Union. This fact was apparently accepted by the rest of the population. However, this evidently did not lead the average worker to draw comparisons disadvantageous to the Soviet Union. He simply repeated standard propaganda lines which glibly glossed over this state of affairs. Thus, instead of concluding that the Soviet economic system must be defective because of the lower living standards which it had produced, Soviet workers frequently replied that the Soviet system was better because it had solved the problem of unemployment; that only capitalists have money in the West; that the Soviet economy was advancing forward whereas capitalism was degenerating and would soon collapse.

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11. Most Soviet complaints about their living conditions concerned the high prices demanded for consumer goods. Above all, they complained about the high price of vodka. They frequently grumbled too that current prices were still higher than before World War II. A few older people noted that a worker's real wages were higher in tsarist times than at present, but this attitude was not held by the average Soviet. Most people tended to reject anything connected with the tsarist regime. When talking about comparative wages, they pointed to the increase in monetary wages since the Revolution rather than refer to real wages.

12. [redacted] no complaints from Soviets about the local housing situation, although [redacted] the Soviets lived under housing conditions which were nothing short of catastrophic. It was not at all unusual, for example, that three Soviet families lived in one room. But the Soviets seemed to be accustomed to primitive housing, as they had known nothing else for many years. Apparently their only concern was to find a place where they could sleep comfortably.

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